

Experts Shape the World: Environments, Economies and Cultures of Expertise

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Bericht von: Elsa Duval / Benedetta Serapioni, Leibniz Institute of European History, Mainz; Julia Röttger, German Institute of Polish Studies, Darmstadt;

This workshop started from the observation that during the „long 20th century“, political decisions and their implementation have been inconceivable without experts and their expertise. Experts were crucial in informing the notions and nature of the world, in diagnosing its transformations and in advising political frameworks in order to face upcoming challenges. Experts were thereby not only observers, but took an active part, whether it was within international organizations, national or transnational networks or missions of technical assistance. Thus experts performed their expertise according to different and often overlapping contexts, activated organizational or personal networks and struggled at times with their own advocacy. All of these dimensions were in the center of the workshop „Experts Shape the World: Environments, Economies and Cultures of Expertise“ organized by Elke Ackermann and Andrea Rehling. A manifold spectrum of scholars was gathered who discussed hypotheses about the epistemic nature of expertise, the interaction between expertise and power, and the conceptualization of experts. Guiding questions were: What qualified an expert? How did experts generate information and how did they process it into knowledge? How did they perform their expertise? How did they interact? How and why did they influence agenda setting, policy- and decision-making? How was expertise negotiated on different scales? How did experts frame their worlds? Which scales did they refer to? What periodization could guide research about experts?

After a brief introduction by JOHANNES PAULMANN (Mainz) and ANDREA REHLING (Mainz) the first panel analyzed the local dimensions of expertise by focusing on experts on the spot and in the field. ELKE ACKERMANN (Mainz) tested her assumption of conservation experts on Galápagos Islands as an ‘invasive species’. She interpreted the scientific expeditions from 1964 onwards as a lasting transformation of the islands’ space and usage by establishing ‘conservation’ as the dominant paradigm of the islands, which was marked by the founding of an international research station as a guarantee for direct access of the experts. Impacts such as direct species extraction, erection of park boundaries and an increasing interaction with tourism concepts and local management were analyzed by Elke Ackermann under this paradigm. She showed how international experts substantially influenced Galapagos’ invention as a unique place of evolutionary science, also informing its ‘universal value’ as a first World Heritage site in 1978.

While the Galápagos were an epitome for international expertise, the function of local experts and the creation of nature reserves for nation building stood at the center of CLAUDIA LEAL’s (Bogotá) talk. She demonstrated how the field and everyday experience of the founder generation of national parks in Colombia in the 1970s and 1980s – foresters, later followed by archaeologists and anthropologists – was the decisive category for the constitution of natural expertise. Their authority, while backed by the state was often problematic in the fieldwork and in interaction with locals. Thus, with the direct absence of the state, so Claudia Leal, a weakly controlled national park system was created – an attribute, which was also understood as a mandatory part of a modern, cultural nation.

This inseparability of conservation from a country’s history and political context was a particular focus of JANE CARRUTHERS (Pretoria). With the case of South Africa’s national parks, she demonstrated the transformation from natural conservation to conservation biology – as a mission-driven and value-laden science, which, while striving to reference universal concepts, has been founded on

locality-based paradigms. With the analyses of flourishing, declining and reviving of elephants' population control methods from 1960–2010, Jane Carruthers demonstrated the controversial nature of experts' opinions. This was shown by the direct influence of changes in the international political system on national and local conservation paradigms, the dominance of processes of decision-making over those of knowledge production, resulting in the creation of flexible and at times uncertain natural management regimes.

The second panel focused on three different groups of experts, their interactions with one another and the consequences of their work. RAF DE BONT (Maastricht) presented his research project's database, which assembled information on international experts of nature conservation through their participation in 21 selected conferences over the 20th century. He highlighted how these conferences first seemed to include exclusively white Western European men, while after WWII, a growing number of US participants appeared. Only in the 1960s, did the conferences start to include experts from developing countries. Closer observations on a shortlist of these actors showed that these „white men in suits“ had flexible areas of competence and mostly specialized on the „global south“. De Bont's specific approach to these actors allows him to show the process and the continuities in the constitution of the network in the *longue durée*.

Soviet foreign policy experts formed the next network, which MARTIN DEUERLEIN (Köln) introduced in his presentation. He argued that, because of their special status, which allowed them to travel more freely, experts were an integral part of the international and transnational epistemic community. Depending on the changing historical context, the Soviet experts, however, were faced with difficulties because of their work on international questions. Within their institutes, these experts performed social science research on issues like migration, poverty, use of resources, pollution etc., and translated western publications. Deuerlein showed how these experts, with their specific approach and perspectives on these questions, attempted to understand and shape world politics and econ-

omy in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the last talk of the panel FRANK REICHERZER (Potsdam / Berlin) spoke about the Trilateral Commission, which was formed in the winter of 1972–1973 at David Rockefeller's and Zbigniew Brzezinski's initiative. The Commission assembled likeminded western and Japanese actors with the aim to manage the changing world and, more precisely, global interdependencies. The commissioners were dependent on recommendations from expert knowledge on various fields, like energy, military or finance. In this case Reichherzer argued that expertise actively allied with political and economic power in order to shape the world. The actors involved identified the problems and tried to find applicable solutions. Reichherzer therefore sees the Commission meetings as global moments – local events with global importance.

The third panel shed light on the multifaceted relation among experts, power and society. Through a study of the International Institute of Agriculture, the later Food and Agriculture Organization, AMALIA RIBI FORCLAZ (Geneva) depicted the 1940s and 1950s as a pivotal time for the experts' impact within international organisations. During these uncertain decades, experts had to renegotiate their background and knowledge, which, Ribi Forclaz concluded, increasingly led towards the professionalization and institutionalization of expertise in line with the agenda of international organisations.

Questions related to the institutionalization of expertise were also at the centre of SIMONE TURCHETTI's (Manchester) talk on NATO's environmental experts during the Cold War. Turchetti used the sociological concept of *boundary-work* to analyse power-experts-relations and to show how the world has shaped the expert. He underlined how after NATO's 1965 political crisis the organisation's agenda shifted heavily from environmental to more specific military research. Therefore, the type of expertise and the background of the experts involved in NATO necessarily had to adapt, and experts were forced to compete to acquire support for their research and their expertise.

Focusing especially on Central and Eastern Europe during the interwar period, MAR-

TIN KOHLRAUSCH (Leuven) analysed the transformation of a different kind of experts, namely architects. Kohlrausch argued that the political, social, and economic context in Europe at that time created new chances for experts to re-frame their role. Architects' position in society went through a process of professionalization. Kohlrausch showed that, on the one hand political legitimacy drew much more on expertise than before, but that on the other hand experts' inherent relevance allowed them to become critical actors of the political system.

In his final remarks, FRANK REXROTH (Göttingen) drew some general conclusions. In this workshop, the expert emerged as a bearer of a specific kind of knowledge, but the talks showed that this qualification remains an ambiguous undertaking. Indeed, the vulnerability of expertise, especially when experts performed in proximity to power and international organizations, emerged as a central issue in the presentations. In Rexroth's analysis, the workshop pinpointed the 1970s as a decisive turning point in the history of international expertise, while the 2000s could be considered an apex of the critique of experts. Rexroth proposed that, instead of defining the expert by focusing on fields of knowledge, or on legitimation strategies connected to knowledge (degrees, social relevance, locality), the expert should be understood as a distinct role in a specific setting of communication. Such a praxeological approach could contribute to shedding more light on experts' practices of self-legitimation in relation to power institutions. Rexroth encouraged the participants to write a history of expertise from the 1920s to the present in terms of its own contestations and ambivalences.

The workshop „Experts Shape the World“ at the Leibniz-Institute of European History in Mainz took important analytical steps for investigating this promising area of research on various scales. The workshop participants inquired how and why in societies describing themselves as „knowledge societies“ experts were ascribed the role of modern day prophets; how knowledge was produced and experts re-framed their roles; how experts shaped, negotiated and legitimated knowledge and decision-making; how they inte-

grated into power systems; and finally, what processes made the experts' expertise vulnerable and controversial and how experts entered fields of ambivalence and critique.

Conference overview:

Johannes Paulmann (Leibniz Institute of European History, Mainz), Welcome
Andrea Rehling (Leibniz Institute of European History, Mainz), Introduction

Panel 1: Experts on the Spot and in the Field: Locality and Expertise

Elke Ackermann (Leibniz Institute of European History, Mainz), An Invasive Species? Conservation Experts on Galapagos Islands

Claudia Leal (Universidad de los Andes), The Nature of Expertise: Scholarly Knowledge vs everyday Experience on the Ground

Jane Carruthers (University of South Africa), The Changing Role and Changing Scientific Expertise in South Africa's Protected Areas

Panel 2: Experts in Networks: Cooperation and Collaboration across Borders and Boundaries

Raf de Bont (Maastricht University), White Men in Suits: Conservation Conferences and Expert Networks in the short 20th Century

Martin Deuerlein (University of Köln), „Everything that we've done so far is now outdated“: Soviet Foreign Policy Experts and the Transformation of International Politics in the 1970s

Frank Reichherzer (MGFA, Potsdam / Humboldt University, Berlin), The Trilateral Commission. Managing Global Interdependencies in the 1970s

Panel 3: Interacting Experts: Organised Experts and the Multi-Level Game of Expertise

Amalia Ribí Forclaz (The Graduate Institute, Geneva), Negotiating the Gap between Field and Office: Agricultural Experts and International Organizations, 1920s-1950s

Simone Turchetti (University of Manchester), In the Thick of „Boundary Work“: Experts at NATO during the Cold War

Martin Kohlrausch (KU Leuven), Designers

of Modernity: Architects, Social Renewal and
the Burden of Expectations

Conclusions

Frank Rexroth (University of Göttingen), Fi-
nal Commentary

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